

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1- 47, and add new claims 48-53 as follows. The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-47 (Cancelled)

48. (New) A payout device for controlling the payout of wire from a coil of wire in a drum having a drum axis and a drum body and a core coaxial with said axis, said coil of wire being wound about said core and having a top, said payout comprising: a first ring resting on the top of the wire coil and having a first inner edge adjacent to the core and a first outer edge spaced from said first inner edge, a second ring resting on the top of the wire coil and having a second outer edge adjacent to the drum body, and a second inner edge spaced from said second outer edge, said first outer edge being spaced from said second inner edge to define a continuous generally circular gap above the top of the wire coil such that the wire passes upwardly through said gap as it is payed out from the wire coil, and a third ring having a third inner edge and a third outer edge spaced from said third inner edge; said third ring overlying said first and second rings and at least partially covering said gap.

49. (New) The payout as defined in claim 48, wherein said first and second rings are coaxial with the drum axis and said gap is an annular gap coaxial with said drum axis, said gap having a gap width defined by said outer edge of said first ring and said inner edge of said second ring.

50. (New) The payout as defined in claim 49, wherein said first and second rings are made from cardboard.

51. (New) The payout as defined in claim 50, wherein said third ring is made from cardboard.

52. (New) A payout for controlling the payout of wire from a coil of wire in a drum having a drum axis and a drum body and a core coaxial with said axis, said coil of wire being wound about said core and having a top, said payout comprising: plurality of rings overlying the top of the wire coil between said drum body and said core, a first ring of said plurality being laterally stationary relative to said axis and having a first outer edge adjacent to the drum body and a first inner edge spaced from said first outer edge and from said core, a second ring of said plurality which moves in connection with one of said first ring, another ring of said plurality and said core to further define a payout opening extending about said axis at a location between said radially inner edge of said first ring and said core, said second ring overlies said first ring and has a second outer edge and a second inner edge, said core having a core diameter, said drum body having a drum diameter, said second inner edge having a diameter greater than said core diameter, and said second outer edge having a diameter less than said drum diameter.

53. (New) A payout device for controlling the payout of wire from a coil of wire in a drum having a drum axis and a drum body and a core coaxial with said axis, said coil of wire being wound about said core and having a top, said payout comprising: a first ring resting on the top of the wire coil and having a first inner edge adjacent to the core and a first outer edge spaced from said first inner edge, a second ring resting on the top of the wire coil and having a second outer edge adjacent to the drum body, and a second inner edge spaced from said second outer edge, said first outer edge being spaced from said second inner edge to define a continuous generally circular gap above the top of the wire coil such that the wire passes upwardly through said gap as it is paid out from the wire coil, and a third ring having a third inner edge and a third outer edge spaced from said third inner

edge; said third ring overlying said first and second rings and at least partially closing said gap.